GALLERY 26

SURREALISM TODAY, PART I

Fantasy in art occurs with some frequency throughout history. Ancient literature and art is rich in mythological beings, while monsters and chimeras were a normal part of the art of the middle-ages. Even after the "rebirth" of humanism in Europe we encounter the visionary works of Bosch, Breughel, Carpaccio, Fuseli, Blake, Goya, and the wild imaginings of the Romantic artists in the nineteenth century. Only in the twentieth century, however, has there been a deliberate and conscious program aimed at releasing the mysterious images and forms which, it is held, inhabit the subconscious regions of the human mind. Surrealism is the name given to the movement which in the early twenties defined certain principles for artists and poets particularly, although they were extended by implication to all men. The movement was led by the poet André Breton and included as members Louis Aragon, Max Ernst, Jean Arp, Joan Miro, Yves Tanguy, Salvador Dali, Luis Bunuel and many others. It looked to artists such as Chirico, Klee, Ensor, Rousseau, and Redon as its parents in the arts; and based its theoretical program very largely on depth psychology. Many of the poets and artists knew Freud personally. The techniques which they developed, in order to open the inner regions of the mind to provide new subject matter for the artist, closely paralleled the methods of psychoanalysis. One method, used by the poets and painters alike, was automatism: the free and spontaneous writing, drawing, and painting of whatever words, images, or forms occurred to the artist without guidance by reason toward some preconceived idea of logical relations and formal excellence. A second, and related, method was to define dream images from the subconscious (or at least pre-conscious) level of the mind, as clearly and precisely as possible. This development was related particularly to the earlier works by Giorgi de Chirico. The images thus formed often evoke a sense of recognition, as though one had seen them before. They are obviously dream-like and, as might be expected, often erotic. The sense of familiarity, even when the images are completely irrational and unrelated to the mundane world, is due, theoretically, to the widespread occurrence of these precise images among "civilized" men; for they symbolize particular urges and drives which are suppressed and sublimated.

More recent developments in art have produced a recognition (by the Surrealists) of the limitations of complete freedom and spontaneity in the creation of art. Along with the acceptance of a lesser, although still central, role for spontaneity and intuition has come, inevitably, the assignment of a larger role to the conscious will and control in the creation of artistic forms.

The paintings in this exhibition are all by artists indebted to the second aspect of Surrealism discussed above. Some of the artists are, or have been, members of the Surrealist movement, others have not. They are all related, however, by their concern with figurative images which are symbolic in this psychological sense. They are also related through the peculiar dream-like environment and the poetry of their art.

BALTHUS

French of Polish descent, born in 1908. He has never belonged to the Surrealist movement nor participated in their activities. Yet, the importance of his works has been acknowledged by them. Certainly the nature of his subjects and the poetic, dream-like atmosphere in which all the figures seem to exist in isolation, relates his work to that of the Surrealists.

LES QUAIS
Oil on canvas 1929

Private Collection

L'ENFANT AUX PIGEONS
Oil on canvas 1959/60

Lent by Pierre Matisse Gallery, New York

LE BÉBÉ GOURMAND
Oil on canvas ca. 1939

Lent by E. V. Thaw & Co., Inc., New York

PAUL DELVAUX

Belgian painter, born in 1897. In the mid-1930's, under the influence of Chirico and Magritte, he joined the Surrealist movement.

PENELOPE
Oil on board 1946

LES ASTRONOMES
Oil on canvas 1961

Lent by Mr. and Mrs. John D. Stuchell,
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

L'ESCALIER
Oil on board 1948

Contemporary Collection of The Cleveland Museum of Art

RICHARD LINDNER

Born in Germany in 1901, has lived in the United States since 1941. He has never been a member of the Surrealist movement and his forms are obviously related to Cubism and to Dadaism. However, Surrealist overtones are present in the atmosphere and symbolism of his paintings.

SKIRT OPEN
Water color and collage

THE TARGET
Oil on canvas 1959

119TH DIVISION
Oil on canvas 1964

Lent by Cordier & Ekstrom, Inc., New York

RENÉ MAGRITTE

Belgian, born in 1898. Magritte joined the Surrealists in 1925 and from then on must be considered one of the important leaders of the movement.

LA PRESENCE d'ESPRIT
Oil on canvas

LA COUR d'AMOUR
Oil on canvas 1960

LA POITRINE
Oil 1960

Lent by Alexander Iolas Gallery, New York

Most of the paintings in this exhibition are for sale. For further information please call Extension 331.